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She seems just now to be at the parting of the ways. She belongs to the school of romantic fiction, and at present stands somewhere, let us say, between the talent of a George Sand and the sensationalism of a Cuida. The next year or two ought to show definitely in which of the directions she will ultimately turn her path.

FREDERIC TABER COOPER.

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WRIGHT'S "LIFE OF WALTER PATER."\*

THERE can be no gainsaying Walter Pater's preeminent interest to the student of literature, and so far as his personal history bears upon the processes of his thought and expression, investigations such as those pursued by Mr. Thomas Wright in his recent "Life of Walter Pater" have a distinct value. Nevertheless there is much that seems unnecessary and diffuse in these volumes: the biographer places too great a reliance upon the cumulative effect of unimportant conversations and recollections, and his anxiety to see Pater through the eyes of certain of his early friends promotes a sense of uneasiness in the reader lest there should be another side to many of these stories.

Mr. Wright purports to show us the real Pater—an unprepossessing boy whose retired disposition could be partly accounted for by his descent from a long line of Roman Catholics of Dutch origin who lived secluded from their neighbors in Buckinghamshire. He grew up amid a refined parsimony which showed itself in his later character in an abiding respect for the advantages of birth and prosperity. From the beginning we find him "playing at priest": a visionary boy full of the "lust of the eye" for all things beautiful, an exceeding horror of suffering, and an affection for cats.

At the King's School, Canterbury, he shows himself to be "essentially a monk—sometimes an ascetic and painfully devout monk, sometimes a mocking, sceptical monk." Mr. Benson has declared that Pater was popular among his schoolmates: his new biographer finds that they considered him a hopeless milksop, while he regarded them as barbarians. Snowballing, it seems, filled him with terror: he did not care for blackened eyes, nor for the pet snakes of his associates.

At Oxford, where he had won an exhibition, a marked revulsion

\* "The Life of Walter Pater," by Thomas Wright. Two volumes. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

of his religious feeling seems to have set in. He is no longer "the saintly boy" of Canterbury: Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Plato, Schelling and Hegel take the place of Stanley, Kingsley and Maurice. He spends vacations at Heidelberg: takes tea and is "tead with" assiduously: indulges in "Mephistophelian sneers" at trammelling creeds, quotes Voltaire and only relinquishes his intention of taking Anglican Orders when rebuffed by the Bishop of London at the instance of some of his own friends.

A classical fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford, allowed him for the first time in his life to feel some security as to his finances; and at the thwarting of his purpose of taking orders, he turned with ardor to the philosophic and literary studies of the Renaissance. It was his period of emancipation: "Laughter gave him a saturnine, Mephistophelian look. Report said that he had sat to Solomon the painter for the portrait of Judas Iscariot."

In spite of his weakness in Greek and Latin, a weakness that could not be hidden even from his own pupils, Pater might entertain some expectations of advancement in the University. His relations with the students seem to have been amicable enough, for while he took little part in social affairs, he could look kindly on the undergraduates' horse-play. "They are like playful young tigers that have been fed," was one of his remembered phrases. On another occasion the recommendation of some reforms drew from him the protest: "I do not know what your object is. At present the undergraduate is a child of nature; he grows up like a wild rose in a country lane: you want to turn him into a turnip, rob him of all grace and plant him out in rows."

A second hitch in the programme of Pater's life was his difficulty with Jowett, the regius professor of Greek. It was a turning-point in his career. Up to this time Pater's teaching by word of mouth and pen could be summed up in the words, "Imitate the men of the Renaissance and enjoy yourself"—a doctrine which, added to his personal attitude and the extravagances of some of his so-called disciples, roused the opposition of Jowett to Pater's efforts to obtain the Proctorship, with its three hundred pounds a year. Mr. Benson has given a version of this affair to which Mr. Wright takes decided exception. He denies that Jowett had "wrongly identified Pater with the advanced æsthetic school and credited him with the views expressed by Mr. Rose, a character in Mr. Mallock's satiric

study of the day, "The New Republic." Mr. Wright contends that the trouble with Jowett occurred in 1874, before the æsthetic movement took shape at Oxford: while "The New Republic" did not appear until 1877.

For whatever cause, the loss of the Proctorship marked the advent of a new thought in Pater's writings,—the old Spartan and monastic doctrine of self-restraint and discipline, "the charm of *ascesis*, of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth,"—the philosophy of his "Marius the Epicurean," of "Plato and Platonism," and "The Marbles of Ægina." Not that any outward change came over Pater's personal habits; indeed, many of these chapters on discipline were prepared "by a man in fairly good health who mortified himself by lying in bed half the day—who indeed actually wrote some of them between the sheets at near upon noon."

Mr. Wright furthermore has been greatly exercised at Mr. Benson's rather curious omission of any reference to St. Austin's Priory in Walworth, where a very ornate ritual was observed by a brotherhood in which Mr. Richard C. Jackson, an intimate associate of Pater's, figured for a while as the Rev. Brother a'Becket. That this gentleman was the original upon whom Pater based the character of his Marius, Mr. Wright seems amply to establish; indeed, Mr. Jackson's omnipresence in this new biography becomes almost a nuisance, although a recent communication to "The Academy," in which he exclaims against Mr. Wright's irreverent handling of Pater,—particularly the reference to him as "a vicar-age Verlaine,"—would imply that he must not be held sponsor for all that these volumes convey.

In a biography so extensive as that of Mr. Wright's, the almost total absence of details of Pater's home life leaves a sense of incompleteness. Here, as is also the case in Mr. Benson's work, there is no *Pater-familias*. Much matter, however, relating to his friends and colleagues, gives this recent *Life* considerable charm and value. The fair sex, indeed, will find little attention devoted to it; in fact, one of the rare instances in which the ladies figure on the scene is that in the anecdote of Pater at a large reception in a Ladies' College at Oxford. The head of the house, seeing him approach, dropped her glove purposely. Instead of gallantly picking it up, he walked on and trod on it.

"Didn't you see how I rewarded the action?" he whispered to

an astonished friend. "If I had not remembered how, in spite of the honors heaped upon him by Queen Elizabeth, Sir Walter Raleigh was in the end led out to execution, perhaps I, too, might have made a fool of myself. Believe me, my dear sir, it was an insinuation of the devil that caused this woman to drop her glove."

Dr. F. W. Bussell, in summing up Pater's literary career, speaks of his life as "the gradual consecration of an exquisite sense of beauty to the highest ends: an almost literally exact advance through the stages of admiration in the Symposium, till at last he reached the sure haven, the one source of all that is fair and good." In the light of these words and of much that Mr. Wright has revealed to us, "Marius the Epicurean" assumes more and more the sense of a personal revelation of its author: into the figure of a friend, or more likely a composite of his friends, he has read the experiences of his own soul,—a soul "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." "Marius" becomes, as it were, the Parsifal of æstheticism, and beneath its outward calm and precision goes on that eternal drama of "the soul at war with sense," which has been the foundation of all the supreme things of literature and art.

It was, therefore, with a certain fitness that Pater should devote his last days to the study of Pascal—that Calvinist of Rome—whose inner life presents so many correspondences with his own. Not only in the philosophy of the French thinker, but also in his very methods of expression, he found himself strangely mirrored at the last. In such a passage, for instance, as that from the essay "*Sur l'Eloquence et la Style*" lies all the philosophy of Pater's style: "The very same sense is materially affected by the words that convey it. The sense receives its dignity from the words rather than imparts it to them." It is indeed the key to the excellence and the defects of Pater's works. "If I live long enough," he once remarked to Mr. Edmund Gosse, "I shall learn quite to like writing." For the dictionary in bed was at once his rack and his pillow, and a word that pleased him must sooner or later have a place found for it in his writings. "Lose the whole world, but find the *mot propre*," he had learnt from Flaubert, whose style is considered the immediate model of his own. It is generally overlooked, however, that Flaubert was no stylist in the sense in which the French recognize it in a Renan or a Loti. There was something Teutonic in his cast of mind which we feel equally in

the work of Pater. As yet, unfortunately, we possess no proper estimate of the relationship and debt of the English pre-Raphaelite and æsthetic movement to the German Romanticists of the "blue flower."

It is in the word rather than in the phrase that we must continue to look for Pater's greatness as an artist. He himself early realized that his sense of rhythm was defective, for Mr. Wright conclusively shows that notwithstanding Mr. Benson's statement to the contrary, he endeavored to write verse, but without success. Therefore, it is to the eye rather than the ear that he makes his appeal; his is the art of the mosaicist who picks out his rich materials bit by bit and lights up or shadows them into precision, nuance or suggestion like some master workman in a shadowy apse of Monreale or Venice. It is a self-conscious kind of expression which Mr. Wright compares to that of the fashionable Claytons who used to preach in lavender kid gloves. Yet Pater smashed no domestic crockery merely to make a noise in the world; but built up slowly and surely a structure of beauty in its ultimate and purest conception. If his writings never brought him more than three hundred pounds a year, he might remember Renan's remark that "nothing is less important than prosperity," and if in glancing back over his half-lonely, half-misinterpreted life we find that it teaches a moral as well as an artistic lesson, we reach a conclusion in which there is no doubt that he, the English great master of "Art for Art's Sake" would himself rejoice.

THOMAS WALSH.

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"NINEVEH, AND OTHER POEMS."\*

A NEW poet is an event; and the mere promise of an accomplished and important poet is a matter of unusual moment. In "Nineveh, and Other Poems," Mr. George Sylvester Viereck has shown himself a poet, and has given promise of importance and accomplishment to come. His present volume exhibits a natural aptitude for emotional expression. He speaks in spontaneous and eloquent verse, melodious with memories of the recurrent haunting harmonies of Poe, the sea-surge of Mr. Swinburne and the plangent tenderness of Oscar Wilde, and ringing also with a

\* "Nineveh, and Other Poems." By George Sylvester Viereck. New York: Moffat, Yard & Company. 1907.